



**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Homer Staves, President  
Travel Industry Association of Montana  
406-656-7086

**Travel Leadership Summit Stresses Importance of Tourism  
to Montana's Congressional Delegates**

**Helena, MT – September 20, 2006** - In a concerted effort by Montana's tourism industry professionals, Montana's congressional delegates are now informed and more educated about the invaluable role that travel and tourism plays in Montana's overall economic well-being.

Members of Montana's travel and tourism industry along with Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger recently returned from a trip to Washington D.C. where Montana joined forces with the national tourism industry in the first-ever *Travel Leadership Summit*.

"Governor Schweitzer and I understand that Montana's economic vitality owes a great deal to our tourism industry" said Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger. "This was an opportunity to remind Congress that over 10 million tourists spend over \$2.1 billion in Montana each year. We need policies in place at the federal level to support—not hinder—the growth of this industry."

The two-day Summit was designed to provide travel industry leaders with an opportunity to directly communicate with policymakers about the key issues that impact not only the constituents in our own states but also the millions of Americans who owe their livelihood to travel and tourism.

Along with the Lieutenant Governor, Montana's 12-person delegation included representatives from our tourism regional commissions, convention and visitor bureaus, Tourism Advisory Council, Tourism Industry Association of Montana, Montana Department of Commerce, the National Park Service and our Native American tribes. This delegation met with each of Montana's congressional representatives and key staffers to emphasize the importance of keeping Montana's tourism industry vital and productive. The key issues addressed included Park Service funding and use plans, airline service, the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative as it pertains to Montana-Canada border crossings, Museum of the Plains Indian federal funding and general support and understanding of the economic significance of the industry.

In its entirety, more than 1,000 travel industry leaders participated in the *Travel Leadership Summit*, including 130 Members of Congress. The Montana portion of this event was sponsored and coordinated by the Travel Industry Association of Montana (TIAM), in partnership with the national Tourism Industry of America. TIAM is a state-wide, non-profit organization whose mission includes advancing the industry, providing information to the public regarding issues facing tourism, advancing the positions taken by the organization and enhancing the state's tourism marketing efforts in order to further strengthen Montana's economy.

**\*\*Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2005, over 10 million people visited Montana spending \$2.1 billion during their stay. Over 29,000 jobs are directly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$531 million in total personal income for Montana residents.\*\***

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